

PhD Program Dissertation Policy

Subject: Dissertation

Scope: PhD Student Dissertation

Responsible Office: PhD Program

Effective Date: 8/1998

Date Reviewed/Revised: 12/2022

Next Scheduled Review Date: 12/2025

Responsible Executive: PhD Program
Director

I. POLICY AND GENERAL STATEMENT

For students completing a Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing (PhD) degree, an original research dissertation that constitutes a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge in nursing must be completed under the direction of a dissertation committee chairperson who is a member of the School of Nursing faculty.

The dissertation committee is composed of at least three, but no more than five, members. The chairperson of the committee must be doctorally prepared and currently on the faculty at the Cizik School of Nursing. At least two members of the dissertation committee must be doctorally prepared nurse faculty members; one doctorally prepared committee member must be from a discipline other than nursing.

Upon completion of the dissertation, the CPHS/IRB protocol needs to be closed or principal investigator status transferred from student to the chairperson of the dissertation committee before the student leaves the university. Access to and ownership and retention of data of any type (digital, non-digital, specimens, etc.) is governed by the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston [HOOP Policy 92: Research Data Retention and Access](#).

At all times during the conduct of the study digital research data should be stored on secure drives or folders that are in compliance with the most current UTHealth Information Technology Policy. These policies include the [ITPOL-007 Laptop Security Policy](#) and the [ITPOL-001 Portable Device Storage Policy](#). Students may retain a digital copy of their de-identified dissertation data after graduation if they are given written permission from the Associate Dean for Research.

II. DEFINITIONS

N.A.

III. PROCEDURE

1. Students begin the dissertation when they have successfully completed written and oral candidacy examinations. Students are strongly encouraged to use require coursework, electives and cognates to develop their final dissertation proposal. Students should obtain and read a copy of the Dissertation Manual. The Dissertation Manual can be viewed from the School of Nursing website under Programs.

2. Students select a dissertation committee chairperson based on mutual agreement and shared areas of interest. The chairperson should be selected during the PhD program when the student has decided on an area of research, and no later than the beginning of N7552. The dissertation chairperson must be a full-time doctorally prepared School of Nursing faculty member who is determined by the PhD Council to be qualified to serve as dissertation chair.
3. Students are encouraged to apply for external grants to fund their dissertations. Students should work closely with their chairperson and the Center for Nursing Research. All research grants should be submitted through and administered by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Cizik School of Nursing.
4. When the dissertation chairperson recommends that the candidate is ready to proceed with the dissertation, the working title of the dissertation and a list of recommended dissertation committee members are sent to the PhD Council for Approval (Form D1). A rationale for the selection of each committee member is included, as well as a NIH bio sketch or curriculum vitae indicating qualifications.
5. The dissertation chairperson will determine whether the student has sufficient background preparation to undertake the proposed dissertation and may recommend additional coursework.
6. Once the PhD Council has approved the dissertation topic and the committee membership, and the dissertation chairperson has approved the proposal, the candidate will schedule the review of the proposal with the dissertation committee. The purpose of this meeting is to insure that the candidate has a well-developed dissertation proposal plan and the necessary resources to successfully carry out the dissertation research. All dissertation committee members sign the proposal form indicating that they are in agreement with the dissertation proposal (Form D2).
7. Approval must be obtained from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of any other institution where the research will be conducted, or Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) prior to beginning the research. The application form is available on line from iRIS. The application must be signed by the doctoral candidate, as the principal investigator, and the dissertation chairperson before it is submitted to the CPHS or AWC. Additional approvals may be required by other agencies. It is the candidate's responsibility to have all the necessary IRB approvals before beginning the dissertation.
8. Candidates must register for a minimum of 12 cumulative dissertation credits to complete the entire dissertation process. Candidates must register for at least 3 credit hours each semester until the dissertation is completed in order to use the library, meet with the advisor and dissertation committee, and defend the dissertation and graduate. The student must be enrolled for at least 3 hours during the semester of graduation. A (P) is recorded on the official grade sheet by the chairperson for all dissertation credits until the candidate has successfully defended the dissertation. A passing grade (P) is recorded by the chairperson when the dissertation has been defended and a copy signed by the dissertation chairperson is submitted to the Office for Academic Affairs.
9. Final defense of the dissertation is mandatory. All members of the committee must certify in writing that the dissertation is complete and that the candidate is ready for the final defense before the final oral dissertation defense can be scheduled.

10. The candidate, upon approval of the committee, schedules the final oral dissertation defense. The dissertation must be approved at least 4 weeks prior to the last class day of the semester. The Office of Academic Affairs notifies all students and faculty in the School of Nursing, and appropriate community groups of the dissertation defense title and date.
11. The dissertation defense will be scheduled for two hours. The candidate should be prepared to do a formal presentation highlighting the methodology, results, and significant contributions of the research. Guests may be present. Following the presentation, committee members and guests may ask questions. After the questions are answered, guests leave the room.
12. The candidate is then further examined by the committee. Following the examination, the candidate leaves the room. The committee will immediately vote (Approval, Approval with Reservations, Disapproval). The committee will tally their votes and deliberate. After the deliberations a second vote may be taken. The results of this vote are recorded and the dissertation Form D3 is signed by all committee members.
13. The candidate is invited into the room to meet with the committee. The dissertation committee chairperson shares the results of the committee deliberations with the candidate (Pass, Pass with Reservations or Fail). If there are committee recommendations for specific changes in the dissertation, or if a majority of the committee has voted "Approval with Reservations" on the second vote, the chairperson is responsible for meeting with the candidate to clarify the necessary changes. The chairperson is also responsible for determining when the changes are complete and when the candidate has satisfactorily addressed the reservations. While it is rare, there may be occasions when the candidate does not pass the dissertation defense. If this occurs, the candidate is informed of this result by the committee following the defense. Within two weeks, the candidate receives specific written recommendations and meets with the chairperson to review the recommendations in detail and develop a plan to address the deficiencies. A second formal defense of the dissertation may not be scheduled in the same semester as the first formal defense.
14. The dissertation chairperson and committee members will sign the title page of the final version of the dissertation prior to being sent for binding. Two unbound copies of the dissertation are turned into the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) no later than the last day of the semester to avoid registering for another semester. In addition, an electronic version of the dissertation in the latest version of Microsoft Word is emailed to the OAA. A cashier's check or money order payable to the HF Group, LLC to cover the binding fee (check with OAA for binding cost).
15. If it is necessary to change a committee member, the student advises the chair of the rationale for considering a change. If the chair approves the request, the student meets with the committee member for proposed replacement to discuss the rationale for a change. A revised Form D1 is sent to the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs with a memo outlining the change and rationale; the student and committee chair sign the memo.
16. PhD Council approval is needed for a change in committee chair. A memo, signed by the student and the faculty member to be replaced as chair, is sent to the chair of the PhD council explaining the rationale for a change in Chair and the name and qualifications of the faculty member being recommended as the new chair. A revised Form D1 and biosketch of the proposed new chair are attached to the memo. Upon approval of the change by the PhD Council, the student files the revised Form D1 with the Office of Academic Affairs.

Please refer to the dissertation manual for more specific detail and sample forms.

IV. CONTACTS

List the phone number and email/web address of the office and/or person who is the subject matter expert on this policy and can answer questions regarding application and interpretation of the policy.

Contact	Telephone	Email/Web Address
PhD Program Director	713-500-3388	https://nursing.uth.edu/programs/phd/

V. EXHIBITS

D1
D2
D3

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Dissertation Title: _____

Dissertation Committee Membership

(Include name and degrees, institution and position, and area of expertise for dissertation research)

1. Chairperson: _____

2. Committee member: _____

3. Committee member: _____

4. Committee member: _____

5. Committee member: _____

PhD Council Approval Date: _____

File a copy of this form with the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs and with each Committee Member.

Approval Form D2

Approval of Doctoral Dissertation Proposal

Student Principal Investigator: _____

Title of Study: _____

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Principal Investigator's Dissertation Committee

Committee Chair: _____ Date: _____

Committee Member: _____ Date: _____

Dissertation Committee Recommendation:

_____ Approval

_____ Approval with Reservations

_____ Disapproval

Original to Vice Dean for Academic Affairs; Copy to Chair, Committee members and IRB(s)

Approval Form D3

Date: _____

To the Dean for the School of Nursing:

I am submitting a dissertation written by **(student's name)** and entitled "**(title of dissertation)**". I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing.

Signature Committee Chair

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance

Accepted

Signature, Dean, School of Nursing

Dissertation Content Checklist

Student's Name: _____

Dissertation Title: _____

The final copy of the dissertation must be in the following order:

- _____ Blank Sheet of Paper
- _____ Title Page
- _____ Approval Page (Form D3)
- _____ Acknowledgments Page (Optional)
- _____ Abstract
- _____ Table of Contents
- _____ Summary of Study
- _____ Proposal
- _____ Manuscript(s)
- _____ Appendixes
- _____ Curriculum Vitae
- _____ Blank Sheet of Paper

Signature of Dissertation Committee Chair

Date

Signature of Vice Dean for Academic Affairs

Date